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SICKNESS, GHOSTS AND MEDICINE IN TONGA.

By E. E. V. Collocott, M.A.
Nukualofa, Tonga.

752 PHYSICAL disabilities have not all equally obvious explanations. If a man is struck on the head with a club, the broken skull and knobby piece of hardwood are material evidences easily 753 associated with his lifeless body. Far otherwise are the mysterious internal pains and weaknesses that attack, now the limbs, then the trunk or the head. How explain the vertigo that may overcome a man on whom is no external mark of violence, that causes his spirit [152] to flee and leave his body senseless on the ground? The Tongan succumbs to nervous pains in a way that, at first sight, seems inconsistent with the stoical fortitude with which he bears muscular injuries; but the explanation probably is that in the one case there is obvious and satisfactory cause for the discomfort, whilst the other is uncanny and dread inspiring. A young fellow, a fine strapping man, who, as a schoolboy in Sydney, had given promise of reaching the highest rung in the cricket ladder, was suffering from a swelling in the side, which the white doctor, a capable surgeon, pronounced incurable without an operation which he, with the facilities at hand, 752 did not deem himself justified in undertaking. The doomed man returned to his own village, and without anæsthetic or antiseptic, was operated on with a penknife, and is now verging into hale and portly, but active, middle age. A woman, very stout, who had lived long enough to become a grandmother, had to have a rib removed. The operation was performed by a skilful European surgeon, but the patient's health would not stand chloroform, and a local anæsthetic proved [152] ineffective. She bore the operation without flinching. Whilst the cutting and scraping of bone was going on the hospital attendants kept asking her how she was. "I'm all right," she would reply, and at last, exasperated by the repeated query, she exclaimed [152] impatiently, "Go ahead, and if I cannot stand it I'll tell you." And yet these people, who endure wounds and fractures with such courage, are unnerved by wind in the stomach, and go to bed to 752 nurse a headache. The native massaging is excellent. I have 759 experienced its benefits. One afternoon I ricked my ankle rather badly. Twice that evening a girl massaged it with warm water and oil (the almost invariable accompaniments of the treatment): it was

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painful, but the next day I walked about without the least twinge. 752
I asked her how she knew where to rub. She replied that she just 759
rubbed. "Well," I said, "How did you learn to do it?" "By doing it," she answered, "my father used to make me go and do it for people." And that was all the explanation she was able to give. At another time I was cured of a strain in the groin by a man who just pressed the top of his thumb gently on the strain, so gently that I thought he was afraid of hurting me: but I was quite well in a few hours.

The trouble with the Tongan practitioners is that they have little 757
or no idea of diagnosing a complaint. They just try one thing after 759
another, and the massaging, excellent as it is, is frequently employed where it is not only useless, but even dangerous. Diagnosis is replaced by a series of trials and failures; as the Tongans say, "We'll have a try." If one thing does not show quick results, try another. A man went to a missionary and asked for medicine for a little girl. "She is very ill indeed," he said, "yesterday we gave her seventeen sorts of medicine and she is not better yet." Different practitioners have their own special remedies. One medicine man, or woman, after another, tries his cure, till one is found which gives promise of success, which shows a "sign," or until death cuts short the experiment, and gives a verdict which is accepted with pious resignation as the will of the Lord.

Nor are efforts at cure confined to the person of the patient. 775
Neglect of the dead is a fruitful source of discomfort and sickness to 753
the living. Many ghosts, however, do not seem to merit so much fear as pity. Certainly there are bad-tempered ghosts, who are the ghosts of bad-tempered people pretty often, but frequently the dead cause annoyance to the living to draw attention to their own miseries. The root of a tree has grown through the head of a buried corpse, 775
and a living relative suffers from headache. Of course the cause of 753
the trouble may not be located at once. The living sufferer has 769
recourse to one treatment after another. All is unavailing. At length the cemetery may be tried. The grave is opened, the root cut out, and the headache disappears. It happens, in the cases of this sort of which I have heard, the patient has generally, if not always been a woman, and the suffering corpse, or ghost, that of an elderly female relative. Sometimes a rearrangement of the buried bones sets everything right, and effects a cure. This ghostly physic is not effective only in cases of headache. The woman who so courageously bore the loss of a rib made good recovery, except for a small hole which refused to close up. It did not occasion any real discomfort, but naturally she preferred to be without it. An investigation of her mother's bones was at length decided upon; but I have not heard whether it has been carried out. The inconsiderate affection of the 775
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775 787 dead may cause much trouble to the living. The poor ghost longs for companionship that it has lost, and wanders forth to seek its old friends, and induce them to come with it. It enters, or approaches, the body of a living friend, usually by the way a hysterical woman, and she may become so violent and excited that several people are required to hold her. A girl in this condition gave a man a good bite in the side; but this exhibition of her powers did not deter him from afterwards marrying her. Perhaps the possessed woman may lie inert, taking no notice of what is said to her. She may tell the onlookers that so-and-so wants her to go with her. One way of treating the trouble is to knead the patient with the knuckles, to press the intruder out. I know a man who chased a ghost round the body of a woman with hot-water packs.

775 753 [761] [774] Fainting fits may be due to the attentions of ghosts. A person in a faint is said to be *mate*, dead. I have heard an unconscious child spoken of as distant, or away; apparently the soul was away.

Massage is not the only remedy. There are leaves which are 775 potent layers of ghosts. Tongan treatment is homœopathic, and the 755 effective leaves have a strong smell. They are said to *namu tevolo*, 757 smell like a ghost or spirit; consequently they have the power of 787 scaring off ghosts. A decoction is made of the leaves, and the juice pressed into ears, eyes, nostrils and mouth, and perhaps rubbed on the body. Ghosts cannot pass the barrier thus set up. There seems to be no apprehension lest the ghost be imprisoned inside the patient. When the patient weeps quietly that is a sign of recovery. Her tears are in sorrowful farewell to her dead friend who is leaving her.

Procedure is simplified by the patient's telling the name of the ghost. The sick girl may not herself know who it is that is so unkindly affectionate, but sometimes she sees the ghost in a dream 778 or in a waking vision, or recognises its voice. Armed with this 769 identification of the intruder, friends visit the grave, and beseech the dead to leave the living alone. There in not a set form of words to be used; respectful remonstrance, threat, anything is in order that may be supposed to be effective. Sometimes the grave is opened and medicine leaves put on the body. A very drastic remedy is to pour boiling sea-water on the grave, though this is not necessarily more effective than turning the bones about and mixing them up. If the head is put where the feet ought to be, and the legs where one would expect to find the head, the cleverest ghost is unable to get itself 775 sorted out and in shape for walking. Ghostly visitations are not always an occasion of sickness. They may be manifested in mysterious lights. People are rather ashamed of having their dead relatives walking about. Neighbours are inclined to judge harshly, and to conclude that the spirit is failing to make good its entry into heaven, and is exhibiting a not unnatural reluctance to take the final

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plunge into the other place. Tongans are of course unaware of the amiable company that Mr. Bernard Shaw assures us is there. 775

The solicitations of dead friends does not at all exhaust the possibilities of ghostly interference with the health of the living. Almost any sickness may as well be due to ghosts as to anything else. A girl who lives with a European family in a place where there is a good deal of bush about, happened to cough in the presence of a wise old lady, and was submitted to the following diagnostic examination. "Do you cough much?" "Yes, I cough a good deal." "Do you sleep by yourself?" "Yes, I have a room to myself." "In the dark?" "Yes." "Ah, that is it. In the bush, by yourself, in the dark. Ghosts. Now what you must do is to put a tent of native-cloth round your bed, and sleep inside that with a lighted lamp." 775 753

Writers have commented on the simplicity of ghosts, and indeed they seem pretty easy to deceive. A precaution that is not without tender pathos is sometimes taken with women who die in childbirth, or whilst they have a child at the breast. A *tappa* mallet is laid on the dead woman's arm, so that she may suppose that her babe is with her, and so rest peacefully and not go and take her child away. But in spite of all precautions a ghost sometimes breaks through our guards. A man goes to sleep in apparently robust health, and in the morning is found dead. A ghost has come in the night and throttled him, and witnesses are not wanting to testify to marks on his throat. Such a death would perhaps be attributed to conduct which had offended the ghosts. 775 [764] 775 761

In earlier days it was extremely common to sacrifice a joint of the little finger on behalf of a sick friend, and in the case of a high chief who was seriously ill a human victim might be offered. Mariner describes the sacrifice of a little girl on behalf of the chief Finau, and I have myself spoken to a man whose mother was an eye-witness of the sacrifice of a man to secure the recovery of a sick chief. In both cases the victim was strangled, and in both cases, too, the patient dishonoured the remedy by dying. 782 165 755

Besides the wide and indefinite number of sicknesses attributable to the misguided affection or malevolence of spirits, a very large range of disorders is classified as *fasi*, a breaking. There seems to be an analogy with the known phenomena of broken bones and strained muscles. The sprains which are amenable to the excellent massage are called twisted sinew, but these supposed breakings are most varied in character, and as indefinite as the illnesses resulting from the pranks of ghosts. The aches caused by lung troubles are supposed to be caused by some sort of internal rupture, and treated accordingly; both internal and externally. As as cure for an aching back massaging is likely to prove effective, even if the decoctions of 752 753

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752 753 leaves that are drunk tend rather to poison the patient than to assist his cure; but applied to pneumonia, pleurisy, or consumption, the method is disastrous. The ideas which direct the healer are of the haziest. I once questioned a man, an intelligent man to boot, who was a noted healer in this genre, as to the type of disorder which he treated. I said that I could understand that a broken bone, or even a strained muscle might be spoken of as a rupture, but what sort of a break was that which made a man have a pain in his chest. What was broken or strained? "It's just a break," he said, and that was all about it. I don't think he was guarding professional secrets through fear of a possible rival.

The rupture that causes the trouble may not be recent, but a little judicious questioning does not fail to identify at last the incident to which the blame attaches. A forgotten fall, or the lifting of a heavy weight, is recalled; "Ah, that is it."

753 827 A third great class of sicknesses embraces boils and ulcers and rashes and skin diseases generally, as well as swellings and tumours. These external complaints have individual names, but the class name, *kungatamaki*, is applied with the usual vagueness to diseases external and internal. A specially severe sickness of this sort is "various thing," an internal complaint, in which a mixture of troubles are present, together with a roving commission which enables them to attack different parts of the body simultaneously or successively.

755 757 The medicines for this type of disease seems to have a special virulency, or to be specially suitable for witchcraft. Medicines in general have the power of causing the sickness which they cure. A girl had a swelling on her abdomen which was cured by a woman, but the girl's brother afterwards had a swelling on the neck. This was caused by the medicine which had cured the girl. A woman was once sitting quietly in church, when all at once she commenced to cough. She coughed, and coughed, and presently felt something in her mouth. She put up her hand and grasped it. It was smooth and round. She thought it was the end of her bowels! She pulled, and the thing came away in her hand, and she cast it from her on the floor—a big, strange, hairy worm. Then she gathered it up in her handkerchief. In spite of her fright, she evidently felt strong proprietary rights in the creature, and would have resented anyone else picking it up; "If I can't pick it up, who can?" The sagacious suggestion was made to drown the animal in medicine, and so make a potion able to cure a similar disorder should it ever reappear. But the worm would not drown. It was thrown into various medicines, but throve in them all, and at last was cast into the fire and burnt. Thus science, on the verge of discovery, was again baffled.

Since medicines have the power of causing the ills they cure they must be treated properly. Unauthorised meddling with medicine

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is dangerous. The practitioner, when he has finished his treatment, carefully puts his basket or little bundle of medicine away in the shade, perhaps in the fork of a tree in the bush—it should not be left in the sun; and then he washes his hands. The owners of healing secrets generally guard their knowledge pretty jealously, and some virtue resides in themselves. It would be useless, if not dangerous, to steal anyone's medicine, but the prescription will be effective if properly bestowed by one person on another. There do not seem to be, however, any special ways of gathering the barks and leaves used, though I have been told of a medicine whose base is a bark which must be scraped from the tree when the rising sun shines upon it, and there is another in which leaves are cut down the middle, and the right halves thrown away and the left used. 755 757 [783] 759 755 757 [278]

In addition to the ordinary massaging there are gentle strokings, some of which appear rather mysterious in their operation. A white man, young and alert, told me that he had a painful swelling on his back, like a blind boil. An old woman came to him equipped with a concave sea-shell with a hole bored through the middle. She lightly outlined with the edge of the shell a square round the swelling, and then placed the shell, hollow side downwards, on the swelling, and gently stroked the shell. There was immediate relief and improvement; the trouble was much better next day, and quite cured in three days.

Less mysterious, and less effective than the white man's stroking the back of a shell, is the practice of holding the stomach of anyone suffering from abdominal pains. The shooting pains caused by wind give rise to much alarm. It is thought that vital parts of the body are leaping out of place, and, quite logically, the friends of the patient seek to hold the restless organ in its proper position. To the Tongan, Europeans probably seem rather heartless in leaving the sick alone as much as they do. Tongans are continually doing something for the patient, holding his head, or massaging his stomach, or what not. It would be very worrying to a sick European, though it must be admitted that much of the stroking and rubbing is extremely soothing. I have known a woman in difficult labour to have all her pains instantly relieved by the gentle pressure of an old midwife's hands. [753] 758 [844] [759]

Toothache, which must be more common now than it was once, is the subject of controversy. Some hold that it is caused by the boring of a little animal, whilst others maintain that it is just a sickness. So far as I have heard the evidence the partisans of the borer theory seem to have the stronger case, as a girl told me that she had herself seen a grub in a man's hollow tooth. 752

Children's illnesses are often attributed to "remembering," that is pining for an absent relative. A child is ill; remedies are tried in 753 858 593 602

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753 vain, it is remembering. The cure is what parental affection
858 naturally prompts. The absent father, or mother, or whoever it is
593 that is remembered, is communicated with, and never fails, if it is at
602 all possible, to hasten to the side of the little sufferer, and the cure
755 is wrought. Although Tongan medical practice is vitiated by the
757 inability to diagnose correctly, it would be unfair to suggest that many valuable remedies have not been found amongst the native plants. Ageing beauty, by the way, has found the secret of restoring
[302] a glossy blackness to greying locks. Nor would it be fair to refuse
[758] to admit the skill with which some things, once they are recognised, are treated, and it would be ungrateful for one who has lived long amongst this affectionate people to forget the tender care they lavish on the sick foreigner, as well as on those of their own race.